

VI: A podcast by the Intergalactic Improv Initiative.

KAYA: *Ride of the Valkyrie*, Episode Four: *Dancing with the Asteroids*. Featuring the voices of Hans Cummings, Ché Grové, Chase Hutchison, JD Kelly, and creator Kaya Renwick.

KAYA: Nobody puts Gratchen in a corner. *I Should Roll*.

KAYA: Last time on *Ride of the Valkyrie*: after discovering that the crate holding the mysterious Prothean artifact left the Citadel, the crew of the *Valkyrie* went to Omega, because obviously all criminals go to Omega. On the way, they dressed Gratch up as Gratchen because he had been exiled from Omega after killing Aria's favorite volus. Upon their arrival at Omega, they hook up with one of Kache's contacts, a quarian information broker named Cipher, who promises to look into their missing crate in exchange for a favor and fifteen percent of their profit. We rejoin the motley crew as they leave Cipher's hacker den.

VI: March 15th, 2184, Terran Universal Coordinated Calendar. Omega Nebula, Sahrabarik System, Omega. Gozu District, Lower Markets.

KAYA: You guys leave Cipher's. Cipher's now on the case, but obviously that's going to take a little while, and she hasn't asked you for her favor yet, so you guys are just kind of doing, like, whatever. And then Bean gets a call from the *Valkyrie's* VI, who is basically forwarding on that, um... [heh] one of the *Valkyrie's* external components is, like...smoking?

GRATCH: Oh boy!

KAYA: Bean and Carver go off to deal with that, and you guys are on your own on Omega. I will say—so, you guys are in one of the calmer districts. It's—again, it's probably, it's probably the district that Afterlife is in, and you've gone sort of down the tunnels into the lower market sort of dealio. It's a pretty calm district because it's one of the ones that Aria firmly controls, being that her headquarters is there, and it is exactly what Omega is: there's lots of people milling around, people who are having good days, bad days, shitty days. You do see there's, there's one of the, the terminals for quote-unquote Omega's Craigslist/Fiverr sort of deal. It's basically—it's the bulletin board where you can put jobs up, and people can accept them or post their own job, or what have you. They're usually full of interesting things...and there's also—there's a whole asteroid. So, where do you want to go? What do you want to do?

JD: Can I ask a couple of questions?

KAYA: Absolutely.

JD: Kasumi Goto is who we believe has stolen this artifact. Can you give us an idea—like what, what is publicly known about—well, I say publicly...within our circles. What would we know about Kasumi Goto and their tactics and capabilities and abilities? Like what are we—what are we getting ourselves, what are we getting ourselves into here?

KAYA: I think that will require a roll from each of you to kind of gauge the group knowledge. Pick a skill that you think would apply to your character's knowledge of Kasumi Goto: History, Academics, anything like that would be totally acceptable. And if anybody rolls like stupid high or stupid low, we'll address that. But otherwise, I'll kind of treat this as sort of an average and I can give you guys an idea.

CHÉ: I'm going to go with Networking. Oh, bugger!

HANS: Alrighty. Rolling History.

JD: I'm going for History. Kache turns to all of you and says,

KACHE: So, we're facing up against Kasumi Goto. What kind of thing do you all know about her? What's she capable of? What, what are we getting ourselves into here?

TITOH: Honestly, I'm not sure she exists.

ZYN: She is a thief.

KAYA: [chuckles] What did you roll?

CHÉ: Eight. Total.

[KAYA giggles]

HANS: I rolled a seven.

[JD laughs]

CHASE: I rolled a nine.

KAYA: 'Kay.

HANS: We're starting off strong.

CHÉ: Seven, eight, nine.

JD: Wow, okay. I rolled a *fifteen* on History. I can't believe the krogan is the one who's gonna have knowledge here [chuckles], but sure.

KAYA: [softly] Oh, my god. Okay, okay. So, I think what this means—if I can get through this without giggling— So, Titoh and Gratch and Zyn, you guys have sort of like this vague...the mythical urban legend figure of Kasumi Goto who flits around the galaxy, stealing the greatest of treasures from the most locked of vaults, but, like, you—she might as well be a myth. Like I'm pretty sure, Titoh, you *literally* think she's a myth.

CHÉ: Yeah, she's like Robin Hood. Like, I got a bow and arrow... that's about it.

KAYA: Yeah. Now, Kache.

JD: [laughs in anticipation]

KAYA: Feel free to stop me if this does not jive with your perception of your character, but this is what I think is going on. I think at some point in your Tuchankan youth you happened upon [laughs] a datapad, like on, like on a crashed ship or something, like, or...it was like in a salvage thing, or whatever.

JD: Okay.

KAYA: And it had *Where in the Galaxy is Kasumi Goto?* [JD chortles] holos on it? Very much like *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* But this is like, this is the new version. And being as humanity has only been in the Galaxy for like thirty years, and Kasumi at this point is probably in her thirties, maybe if we're stretching it.

JD: Yeah.

KAYA: This probably wasn't all that long ago in terms of Kache's lifetime, really. But I think that—so, it, yeah, again, it's—it is very much, it is a reboot of Carmen Sandiego starring Kasumi Goto and she is like hacking into these crazy vaults and stealing things. Like there's one episode where she steals the mass relay monument from the Citadel. Like, that's the level of stuff we're talking about. And so, I'm going to say this is what you found and this is how you know of Kasumi Goto, and I will leave it up to you—

JD: Okay.

KAYA: —what you think of her.

KACHE: So I've got some insider knowledge on this Kasumi Goto. Pretty sure she uses a lot of, like, misdirection, surprise, all kinds of tactics to make you look one way and think another. So, we could be looking at some kind of mind-warpin' or shiny things to make us look another direction, or *explosions*—love a good explosion. Gratch, you love explosions, don't you?

GRATCH: [elongated] Yes. Gratch go boom.

KACHE: How, how, how do we deal with that? How, how do we plan for someone who's gonna twist our melons like that?

ZYN: In situations such as these, this one is forced to contemplate, "What would Blasto do?" And in this case, this one is reminded of this one's favorite Blasto adventure: *Assignment Improbable*.

KACHE: Go on. What happened?

ZYN: It was a very difficult mission that Blasto improbably succeeded at. Just as we will improbably succeed at capturing Kasumi Goto and retrieving the Prothean decision maker.

KACHE: Sounds improbably probable.

ZYN: This one thinks so.

TITOH: Has anyone considered that she might not exist, and we'll be doing a wild goose chase? There is not actually any evidence that she's the one who stole anything.

GRATCH: Yes.

TITOH: Sounds a bit like a, like a loopy hanar's dream. No offense.

ZYN: Oh, that is, that is untrue. A dream from the Enkindlers is as good as truth. [TITOH sighs] Or so this one has been told this one's entire existence.

TITOH: [exasperated] Well, that's the problem, isn't it?

KACHE: Wait, a what now? Did you say a dream from the Enkindlers?

TITOH: Yes, he said it came to him in a dream.

ZYN: Oh, it was not this one. The dream belonged to Leili, the docent of the museum.

TITOH: So it's a third-hand "came to him in a dream". Even better!

KACHE: The—you mean the bosun of the Intense Blossom of an Asari's Awning, like...they just had a dream that it was Kasumi Goto?

ZYN: Indeed. It was a vision from the Enkindlers.

GRATCH: I mean, she, she has to be real. I—I saw her one time. When, when I, when Gratch was a little Gratch, little vorcha, on the eve of the winter solstice, Kasumi

came down the chimney and she stole all my presents. That's why I didn't get any.

TITOH: Oh, sweetie. I have some news for you. None of that's real.

GRATCH: But—

ZYN: Presents are real.

GRATCH: Who stole Gratch presents?

KAYA: Does Heshtok have winter?

[CHASE and CHÉ sputtering]

GRATCH: The, uh, eclipse solstice? I don't know.

JD: Once again, I believe that Gratch is an unreliable narrator, and it's true from Gratch's perspective. [laughs]

CHÉ: I just picture Gratch, like, doesn't remember much, and so he just takes, like ideas from other cultures.

JD: [overlapping] Yes! Sure, it's real.

CHÉ: Like 'this is a memory I have. And Santa came down the chimney [laughs] cause I heard some human kid talking about it'.

KAYA: [high-pitched disbelieving amusement] Oh my God. [back to business] I will also say Zyn did see there was the small bit of security footage that you got from the Spacebucks, that somebody who looks like the vid representation of Kasumi Goto did leave the museum, presumably with that crate. And by vid representation of Kasumi Goto, we're talking small, lithe, human female in a hood.

JD: Grainy, yeah.

KAYA: Yeah, it's—it's grainy, but like—

HANS: [overlapping] Yeah, like the fuzzy, the fuzzy photos of the guy in the woods just kind of—

[EVERYONE chuckles]

KAYA: [overlapping] Yes. Bigfoot.

HANS: Like if they put photos...

JD: So— and—we all know that? We've all seen that footage, yeah?

KAYA: I don't remember if Zyn specifically showed it to you guys.

CHÉ: Well, that's important information, don't you think, to share with your...?

HANS: How long did it... It took us several hours to get to Omega from the Citadel, right?

KAYA: Yeah, it'd take you a few hours.

HANS: I could have showed all of that evidence to them during transit, and I think I probably would have.

KACHE: So hang on a second. If we got footage, we know someone stole the thing from the Rotund Klaxon of the Prune's Viewning or whatever, but the bosun also had a dream about it. That seems like a pretty big coincidence for me. Could, like...do you think jellies could be, like, conduits for footage? Or could this be, like, some kind of, like, projection in their minds? Like, I don't know about *biology*, but maybe we should ask a biologist. like, is it possible that their brains connect?

CHÉ: I'm just picturing Kache being like, "*Aliens!* [KAYA cackles] Like, is it *possible* that their *brains* connect to—" [bursts out laughing, as do CHASE and KAYA]

JD: Like, Kache is serious. Like, okay, there's—there's footage, but why would the person have a dream about it at the same time. So what caused the dream? Is someone messing with Leili? Like, why would they have had the dream? Because he doesn't believe in the Enkindlers, so there must be a, like, a practical reason. You know, it's like, is—is Leili picking up on the security footage somehow, and when they say, "see it in a dream" like, is that an interpretation or are they like, literally picking up waves in the air? [beat] "*Aliens.*"

KAYA: Kache is a smart cookie. I'm waiting for you guys to just decide to, like, go and post a, "Hey, has anybody seen Kasumi Goto?" on Craigslist.

[JD bursts out laughing]

CHÉ: Or someone who's *dressed up* as Kasumi Goto.

GRATCH: Wait, I see her! [sputters] You saw in the footage! Brown hair. Black hair? I don't know. She's *there!* *Looks like the footage!*

CHASE: And just points to some random human walking by.

TITOH: Exactly. Any humanoid with a hood and tight black clothing could be that person on the thing.

KAYA: The human in question startles—because again, Gratch is not quiet!—and notices and looks over her shoulder and at seeing Gratchen, fucking *books* it.

GRATCH: Wait, come back! We're looking for you.

JD: Does...does Gratchen chase?

CHASE: [mischievously satisfied] Yes.

KAYA: I'm gonna see how fast she runs. [oh dear; amused] She's not running very fast, so you could probably catch her if you wanted.

CHASE: Sorry, I asked if Gratchen was played by Chase. Yes, Gratchen is played by Chase.

JD: [lol] No, as in, does Gratchen *give* chase to the...*suspect*? is the only word I can think of here.

CHASE: Sort of. Gratchen's gonna like trot off a few steps. Not, not, not full on chase, but following.

GRATCH: Hey, come back here. I'm looking for you! In the video!

CHÉ: I'm gonna grab him and yank him back. Like an annoyed mother.

GRATCH: Ow!

HANS: Zyn is going to follow Gratchen.

CHASE: Gratchen's arm is currently being held by Titoh.

ZYN: Please, please wait! You may be the sapient we are looking for!

TITOH: None of you know how to lay low, do you.

KAYA: I would like Zyn to roll a Persuasion ch—well, Charm or Intimidate, whichever one you prefer, but you're rolling it at disadvantage because she's terrified.

HANS: As well as she should be.

JD: Can I do a Perception?

KAYA: Sure!

JD: Just to look at this person and go... Yeah, I'm just checking. They're definitely not Kasumi Goto, right? Just...

HANS: I may regret this, but I'm actually going to try to Intimidate because I want her to stop, so Zyn is like,

ZYN: This one commands you to halt!

KAYA: 'Kay.

JD: My Perception's a twelve.

KAYA: 'Kay.

HANS: Uh...minus one.

[KAYA breathlessly cackles]

CHASE: The whole roll??

HANS: [you bet!] Yes.

[KAYA dying of laughter]

JD: [horrified amusement] Zyn accidentally opens fire. It's like, "Nooo!"

KAYA: [cannot even; elongated] *Oh my god...* [composes herself] I think with a minus one, she not only gets away, but you attract the attention of another human, a man who looks at least a little burlier. He looks pretty grumpy, and he's like,

BUTLER: Hey! What are you doing! Leave her alone!

KAYA: And I will say, Kache, with a twelve... Well, she doesn't *look* like... She's not wearing the same outfit she does in the vids, so probably not, because everybody knows Kasumi Goto only has one outfit.

JD: [matter of fact] Yeah!

KAYA: Like, obviously.

JD: Oh, well, there's usually a—an alt. You just gotta press, press the right button to switch out that costume, but, but—

KAYA: Oh that's true. True, true, true. Like, in the—you got the one video game with your— [trying not to laugh again] with like your first merc job creds.

JD: Yeah, yeah, didn't—didn't get the DLC, you know?

KAYA: And it had the alternate outfit. [collapses into breathless giggles again, squeaks out "Oh my God"] So okay, you now have this, this burly human dude coming up, kind of getting in your face...in your... *blob...*

JD: Can I interject?

KAYA: Go ahead.

JD: Can I step between them?

KAYA: Absolutely.

CHASE: Does he look official?

JD: [uh, well] I look krogan, is what I look, so...

KAYA: Does he? Does anybody look official on Omega?

CHÉ: [laughs] Yeah— it's Omega!

CHASE: [clarifying] Does he look like he works for Aria?

KAYA: This guy—okay, uh... actually, give me a Perception roll if you wanna take a look at this guy.

CHASE: [psyched] *Oh it's a natural twenty!!* [whiplash to solemn] but it's a nineteen because I have a negative one.

KAYA: Okay. I will still honor a nat twenty. He does not look like one of Aria's guards. You know Aria's guard outfits pretty well, you remember those. But he does look a lot more put-together than most people on Omega, and he's kind of got this, like, blue and brown thing going on. So you don't recognize him as any of, like, the major merc gangs. So yeah, he looks—he looks quite put-together, but not for any organization you would recognize. Quick question, how long have you been away from Omega?

GRATCH: Uh...like, a year.

KAYA: Okay, perfect. Love it. Thank you.

[CHASE chuckles]

JD: Kache steps in between this human and Zyn and says,

KACHE: There ain't nothing going on here. My friend over here has just got a bad case of varren itch and it makes 'em antsy.

KAYA: [chortles] Roll me some form of Persuasion.

ZYN: This one is not capable of contracting scale itch from a varren.

[KAYA cackling]

KACHE: [work with me here!] Sure y'are!

JD: And, and Kache turns around and *winks* at Zyn.

KAYA: Roll Persuasion of some sort with advantage.

JD: [laughing] Didn't roll well... What is this under...

KAYA: So it's Charm or Intimidate depending on, on...I—I think it's probably Charm.

JD: Charm. There we go. That'll be...I rolled a seven, but I've got a minus three, so that'll be four.

KAYA: He rolled an eighteen.

HANS: [save us] We're doing *well*.

KAYA: Yeah, this is goin' *great*. [JD guffawing] This—he, he looks... He looks at you and then he looks at Zyn, and he says,

BUTLER: I have to agree with the hanar. Hanar can't contract scale itch. I have that on *very* good authority.

JD: Kache doesn't know what to say at this point, he's just lookin' at him...

CHÉ: I'll just—I'll just step in and be like,

TITOH: Look, just, just let us go. The lady's fine, my friends have just had a bit too much to drink at Aria's. I'll just take them home. I'm their, I'm their sober driver.

KAYA: I will get you also to roll Charm, Ché.

CHÉ: Okay...

ZYN: [oblivious] This one does not imbibe beverages...in public.

KAYA: Zyn, quit shovin' your tentacle in your mouth!

JD: Too honest.

CHÉ: It's a total of sixteen.

KAYA: Okay, I'm going to reroll... Okay, you beat him this time—

CHÉ: [overlapping; soft, elongated, "thank God"] Yay...

KAYA: —well done. He rolled a twelve. This seems like a much more believable response, let's be fair. He says,

BUTLER: Alright... Don't go causing any trouble. Have a good one.

GRATCH: Bye!

JD: [incredulous cackling] Does he know who he's talking to? *Don't go causing trouble*. It's gonna happen!

KAYA: He looks back over his shoulders, he's kind of confused by the vorcha saying bye, and then I think *that's* the moment when he clocks Gratchen and decides...nope. Nope! Not asking questions. Bye.

JD: [tickled] Is he not into that? It's not his, not his kink?

KAYA: [snrk] You, you'd need to do some serious Insight checks on that one and, like, yeah.

JD: [guffaw] I won't. I won't. That's—that's not knowledge that I need. [giggles]

CHASE: Gratchen is just smiling, very convinced that the disguise is perfect and yeah.

KAYA: Oh, I'm sure.

CHASE: Gratch feels very well hidden.

[JD laughs]

KAYA: Okay. What are you guys doing now?

ZYN: This one has never been to Omega. Perhaps Kache and Gratch would have suggestions as to where we should go. Are there museums on Omega? Cultural activities in which we might participate?

GRATCH: Um... The Blue Angels keep prisoners in cells you can look at if you're with them, but, um, museum? Kind of? More of a menagerie?

KAYA: Ha!

ZYN: Are they valuable? Perhaps we are best able to locate Kasumi Goto by going somewhere with valuables she may be inclined to steal.

TITOH: I like that idea.

GRATCH: I... I don't know. Gratch never been to museum.

KACHE: I mean, if you're looking for a specific woman and you want a *cultural activity* on Omega, I know a place we could go.

ZYN: Most excellent!

KAYA: [quietly] Oh dear.

ZYN: This one will follow you.

KAYA: [again quietly] Oh dear.

GRATCH: We, we can't go there...

KACHE: [disappointed] Oh, spoil sport!

GRATCH: Aria's looking for Gratch. Aria might find Gratch. No. Gratch no go.

ZYN: But you are cunningly disguised as Gratchen. Clearly you are not the same vorcha.

GRATCH: [easily convinced] Yeah! Aria does not—no problem with Gratchen!

TITOH: [not convinced] He still might do the wrong kind of... uh... attention? We don't exactly want everyone in Aria's hideout *staring* at the *vorcha* in the *wig*!

KACHE: That's the great thing about strip clubs, is nobody's looking at the other patrons in the bar!

TITOH: Unless they think he's a performer!

GRATCH: [try anything once!] Gratch could dance.

KACHE: We could earn a few credits that way.

TITOH: [Kalahira preserve me] I both want to see this and do not want to see this.

KACHE: [a heartbeat of common sense] Maybe you're right. Maybe it's safer to go elsewhere.

TITOH: Let's just—if you wanna have—let's just go to the smaller places if you really want to go somewhere *cultural*... that's not under the actual nose of Aria.

GRATCH: [easily convinced] Yeah!

KAYA: [devious GM] But it would be so much *fun*.

JD: [chuckling loudly] I—I'm literally having a war in my brain of, "Do I force this? Do I not force this?" [further descends into chuckles]

GRATCH: [changes mind again] No, no, okay. The hanar is right. Gratchen's very good disguised. It doesn't matter. Aria wouldn't recognise Gratchen if he walked up in front of her and said "*Hi!!!*"

TITOH: [fuck it] You know what? Screw it. Let's go do it!

GRATCH: [enthusiastic] Yeah!

HANS: I'm going to open up my omnitool and mark on my calendar that someone said I was right.

[KAYA & CHÉ laughing]

CHÉ: Happens that infrequently, huh?

HANS: So far.

KAYA: Okay, so with *that*, are you guys headed to Afterlife?

CHÉ: Yeah, Aria's not after *me*. If Gratchen wants to...y'know—

JD: [overlapping] Uh, yeah, Ka—

CHÉ: —whatever.

JD: [overlapping] Kache leads them all to the strip club, yeah.

FORNAX VO: Are you ready to experience xenophilic bliss? Fornax has been providing the galaxy with multispecies erotic content since 2167. From drell to hanar, asari to volus, your every desire lays between the pages of the latest issue of Fornax. Available on the Omega marketplace or wherever fine stimulating literature is sold.

VI: Gozu District, Afterlife.

KAYA: [hate to break it to you, bud] So: y'all are not Commander Shepard. You do not just get to waltz into the front door. You find the big line at the front with the elcor bouncer. It is a long line, as usual. The music is booming out from here—you can hear it from here. And, yeah! How are you going to get into this terribly exclusive club?

HANS: I get in line!

[KAYA wheezes]

CHASE: [using Gratch's voice] I get in line.

JD: I would like to make sure that my armour and colours are showing in terms of being a krogan that's passed his Tuchankan Rite of Passage, and that I'm a mercenary and sign—you know, that I am known for doing that mercenary work. And I would like to go straight up to the bouncer instead, and say,

KACHE: Hey. Me and my friends would like to go and, you know, partake in the... goods on offer.

JD: And I would like to make a roll with the "I Know A Guy" perk.

KAYA: Okay, awesome. Great. Go for it.

JD: Which... may or may not work! [chuckles] Because I'm showing colours and that I'm a mercenary, can I roll it as an Intimidate? Because it's more 'you shouldn't be denying me entry', as it were?

KAYA: Yeah, that's fine.

JD: Uh, thirteen.

KAYA: The elcor—unmoved as always, of course:

BOUNCER: Unimpressed: Who are your friends?

JD: [stuttering chuckle] I—I point over to the trio in line. [more chuckling]

CHÉ: I'm just gonna, like, shoulder my way in front of him and be like,

TITOH: Look, I ran with the Blue Suns for a while... so... just let me in, okay? I'll bring you good business.

KAYA: Zyn, Gratchen, are you doing anything to assist here?

HANS: Yeah, I'll float up, and is like:

ZYN: This one has a great interest in seeing the cultural activities in this facility.

GRATCH: Well....

ZYN: This one has been told it is the best cultural attraction in Omega.

TITOH: [for fuck's sake] *Really* killing our street cred here.

KAYA: And, and what is—what is Gratchen doing?

CHASE: Gratchen's gonna walk up.

GRATCH: I'm Gratchen! I'm late for my first day.

[KAYA & CHÉ laughing]

JD: That is true!

KAYA: [wobbly; quietly] Oh my fucking lord... okay.

GRATCH: I just wanna dance.

[CHÉ laughing]

TITOH: I—I'm his ha—I—I'm Gratchen's ha—I'm *her* handler.

GRATCH: Yeah!

KAYA: Can, can you three roll me each a d6—

JD: [overlapping] Glorious.

KAYA: —and tell me what you get.

JD: Absolutely glorious.

CHASE: Six!

KAYA: Nice!

CHÉ: Ooh! A six!

HANS: Six!

KAYA: You guys—*all three of you* rolled sixes?

CHÉ: Six, six, six!

KAYA: Holy *shit!*

[EVERYONE celebrates]

KAYA: Okay, for a made-up, on-the-fly Luck, like, advantage check, that worked out pretty darn well. The elcor looks all three of you over and pauses on Gratchen.

BOUNCER: Begrudgingly: you may go in.

KACHE: Thanks. You're a real pal.

GRATCH: Where's the dressing room?

BOUNCER: Deeply unimpressed: you should already know that.

TITOH: She's forgetful.

BOUNCER: Dismissive: this is not my job.

KACHE: I'm sure it's just first day nerves. [JD spirals into giggles]

GRATCH: It's okay. I'll find it.

BOUNCER: Exasperated: I do not give a fuck.

HANS: That's a *salty* elcor.

JD: [chuckling] *Wow*.

KAYA: [chuckle shrug] Omega bouncer, man.

JD: Fair.

TITOH: [let's not press our luck] Okay, we won't waste any more of your time. [addresses crew through her teeth] Let's just *go in*.

CHÉ: And she, like, shuffles everyone through.

JD: We head in.

KAYA: Alright. It's Afterlife, man, you know what it looks like! Music is *bumpin'*, there's at least, I think, a bartender per floor. The asari are having at it. It's—yeah: it's loud, it's cramped, it's full of people. And you can see Aria's purple crest. She's on her couch. She's there.

ZYN: This is not what this one was expecting.

KACHE: Why don't you just float around and see some of the sights? See if there's something you like out there.

ZYN: Very well.

HANS: I will float around, and...the longer I spend here, the more that my body starts, like, flashing in time to the beat of the music.

KAYA: *Yes! I love that.*

JD: If I remember rightly, the bar is in the middle and it's circular, is that right? And there's like a central island to the bar?

KAYA: That's on the lower level, I think? On the main Afterlife level, there's the dancers on the podiums in the center and the bar is off to the side.

JD: Can I make sure that we either stay on the lower level with the bar in between us and where Aria is to sort of 'break line of sight', or if we do go upstairs, to make

sure that we, like, go into one of the booths or the scooped-out side areas just to kind of avoid Aria's main goons clocking eyes on us.

KAYA: You would have to go all the way around and then up the stairs to get to Aria's couch, so if you want to go down to lower Afterlife, you totally can. I will say that as that will go past the line of sight of one of Aria's main buddies—because she has the two, one on either side of the stairs—Gratch is gonna have to Stealth past if you're going to lower Afterlife.

JD: Fair. [thinks] Um... Yeah, I, I... hmm. I do—I, I lean to Titoh and say,

KACHE: We should probably keep Gratch out of too much prying eyes, if we can.

TITOH: Yeah. Maybe just get lost in the dance floor?

GRATCH: [innocently] Titoh keep Gratch safe?

HANS: [laughing]

KAYA: [too sweet!] Aww.

TITOH: [begrudgingly] If I must.

KAYA: [hella amused]

KACHE: Good. I'll get some drinks.

JD: I'm gonna go to the bar and order the nastiest krogan synthehol that I can find. [KAYA is amused] I'm not asking them what they want; that's what I'm buying.

KAYA: Okay. So you're buying a flight of ryncol, essentially, is what you're getting—

JD: [overlapping] Yes.

KAYA: —yeah. Okay, awesome.

JD: [overlapping] Yes.

KAYA: Yeah. Okay—

JD: Yeah, yeah. Preferably on a human ski with holes in it so we can all do it like in one on a board together.

KAYA: Love it. Love it. Yeah. Yeah. You—okay you buy, you buy a flight of ryncol. [JD chuckling] I'm gonna say that's probably, like, twenty credits.

JD: Sure.

KAYA: Ryncol's not terribly expensive. Great: you have that. [starting to lose it] What are the *rest* of you doing?

CHÉ: I'm trying to teach Zyn how to dance. So... *And* keeping Gratch out of trouble. Let's just make a little circle, you know, that you do in the dance floor? Just keep you guys safe. I take one of Zyn's tentacles. [giggling] I'm like trying to dance with it.

HANS: I'm distracted by this large holographic display in the middle because it's the closest thing I've seen to anything that looks somewhat cultural.

KAYA: [amused] Ha! Okay, good. And how, how's Gratchen doing?

CHASE: [in Gratch's voice] Gratchen's just vibin'.

KAYA: Tioh, how *careful* are you being to keep Gratchen out of line of sight of the buddies, one on either side?

CHÉ: Pretty careful? But also like—

KAYA: [overlapping] Okay.

HANS: [quiet chuckling]

CHÉ: —you know, he's his own person. I'm gonna give advice but like—

KAYA: [overlapping] Okay. Okay.

CHÉ: —if he wants to go, like, kill himself, like, whatever.

KAYA & CHÉ: [chuckling]

KAYA: [amused] No, no skin off—no, no scales off your nose?

CHÉ: [hell no; laughing] I'm— I'm not gonna kill myself for this like person I've *just met* who's like on a mission to be discovered, like [makes silly non-committal noise].

JD: I, I mean, the rolls for the makeup job, they were alright, weren't they? They weren't the best, but they weren't terrible.

KAYA: They were—no, they were *quite good*, I think one of them was a nat twenty, I think.

CHASE: They were good. They were good.

KAYA: Yeah, he's—he is quite disguised. I'm just I'm, I'm, I'm... [GM doing GM things, pay no attention to the GM behind the curtain] making sure that I'm dialed in on

how this is going. Okay, so I will say that with— well, Gratchen, how careful are you being?

CHASE: Um... [contemplates] At the start, Gratchen is being very careful. Gratchen is squirreling really hard though and, for, you know...progressively getting less careful and—and as time goes on is looking to see if there's an empty pole.

TITOH: Gratch! ...*en!* It might not be a great idea to bring so much attention to yourself. Or *us!* So... [whispers] s—stay down here.

GRATCH: [oops, sorry mom] Oh. Sorry.

JD: I arrive back to the group with the flight of drinks and say:

KACHE: Here! Drink up! So, Zyn, see anything ya like?

ZYN: [surprised?] There are no hanar here. [is Zyn having an awakening?] Although this one must admit there are certain attributes of the asari that are not... entirely unattractive.

KACHE: You gotta remember the asari don't just touch your body. They touch your brain too.

GRATCH: How do they touch your brain?

ZYN: That sounds painful.

KACHE: Well they ain't surgeons.

KAYA: [referring to Zyn's comment] Depending on which asari you get, it is. [JD cackling] How many rounds of drinks are we drinking? How drunk are we getting?

CHASE: Do we need to roll a check for the surfboard?

ZYN: This one does not drink... in public.

CHÉ: [chuckling]

CHASE: Were we taking the shots on the ski at the same time?

JD: That, that, that was certainly the idea to.

CHASE: [overlapping] Do we need to do a Dex[terity] check?

KAYA: [overlapping] Probably? Yes, I will say that whoever [JD laughing] is taking, whoever is taking the shots from the flight at the same time: Dex[terity] check please.

CHÉ: I have a pretty good Constitution so... I'm going to ace this.

HANS: I don't want to be rude though so I will hold one as if, you know, I'll *have* a drink. But I won't *drink* it. That would be unsightly.

JD: Seventeen.

CHÉ: That's a twenty-two.

CHASE: Rolled a two.

CHÉ: *Twenty-two.*

CHASE: Oh—

KAYA: [overlapping; incredulous] You rolled a *two*?

CHASE: —oh boy.

KAYA: Twenty-two. Okay! So— [cackles] So Kache and Titoh: *no problem whatsoever.* [CHÉ laughs] Gratch, on the other hand, [gasps loudly at an idea] They gave you fake nails! [CHASE laughs in comprehending dread] And this is causing problems. So I think either—I think you fumble it. Up to you whether you, like, you spill it or you get some of it or, or what. But I think you, you fumble it.

GRATCH: [loud consumption and spillage noises]

CHASE: And it's gonna, like, go down my face and maybe smear the makeup?

CHÉ: [devastated] I worked so hard on that.

JD: Oh no...

KAYA: [mwahaha] Okay.

GRATCH: [unfazed] That was delicious.

KAYA: Okay. Um... [naughty GM wheeze and cackle; pauses; sighs; apologetically but with undertones of glee] I'm sorry, you guys: the security guards rolled a nat twenty.

CHÉ: [devastated noise] But we're just *drinking!* That's what you *do* in Afterlife...

JD: [overlapping] It's fine! [it's not fine]

KAYA: [apologetic] Mm-hmm.

CHÉ: [overlapping] We didn't do anything wrong!

KAYA: [overlapping] Mm-hmm.

JD: [overlapping; pleading] What's the worst that could happen?

KAYA: [repeating in amusement] "What's the worst that could happen?" [not sorry] Well they're just, they're keeping an eye on things. And that nat twenty Perception check, it's... You guys kind of form an *interesting* group. It's a little bit odd-couple-y, I *will* say.

JD: [as nonchalantly as a river in Egypt] I don't know what you're talking about. We are *perfectly* normal. [JD & KAYA laugh]

CHÉ: And we're on Omega, like, you've not seen stranger things than this?

KAYA: Well, I don't—there aren't a whole lot of hanar around. And how often do you see vorcha in dresses?

CHÉ: [wink] Not often enough!

JD: [losing it]

HANS: Truth!

KAYA: Yeah, [see!] that's the problem! So I think, I think they've been just like keeping an eye on you, they're doing their job, right? You know, Aria only likes *controlled* bar fights. [JD giggling] So, ya know... They've consistently been rolling low on their regular checks, but unfortunately that was a *natural twenty*, and so as you guys are enjoying yourselves—and maybe like laughing a little bit at Gratchen's makeup—one of Aria's two main guys stalks in and grabs your shoulder, Gratchen.

[GRATCH makes startled noise]

ANTO: Aria wants to talk to you.

CHÉ: [oh shit] Oh...

GRATCH: [meekly] What did Gratchen do?

ANTO: None of my business. Up you go.

GRATCH: [sheepishly] Um...

TITOH: This is great! I—

GRATCH: [overlapping; concerned] Titoh?

TITOH: —I actually wanted to talk to Aria. This is wonderful. Gratchen is my... uh... bodyguard—

GRATCH: Yeah!

TITOH: —I was hoping you'd come talk to me because I, I, I, I, really have—I have business with Aria. So, take me to her.

CHÉ: She says very confidently.

KAYA: Roll me a Charm roll.

CHÉ: [quietly] How charming am I... [exclaims] Oh! That was so close to a natural twenty! That's a dirty twenty, actually.

KACHE: Oh!

ZYN: Oh!

JD: Yay!

KAYA: Okay. Okay. Okay, he looks skeptical, but he doesn't immediately shoot you.

CHÉ: That's a good sign.

KAYA: So that's a pretty good, you know...

ANTO: I don't remember there being a drell on the list.

TITOH: You wouldn't remember because I am *incognito*.

ZYN: These two are employed by this one. This one must insist to accompany them wherever they go.

GRATCH: He's incogniko too. [Gratch word good]

ZYN: This one must ensure that this one's *investment* is well spent.

KAYA: You can tell he doesn't believe you... [corrects herself] It's not that he doesn't believe you, it's that he's not impressed. He's not convinced. *But* he has had a direct order from the Queen of Omega to bring this weird-ass vorcha up to talk to her, and so he's gonna do that. And he goes,

ANTO: Alright, well, if you guys are gonna insist on coming up, on your own heads be it.

JD: [overlapping] Uh—

KAYA: —And he—yeah, go ahead, Kache?

JD: Kache is gonna say to the rest of you:

KACHE: You all have some fun up there, but, if you need another 'round of drinks' just let me know.

JD: And I'm gonna roll a Performance to imply to them that if you need a distraction to escape, let me know. So it's like if you need another *round of drinks*—

CHASE: [overlapping; in Gratch's voice] Then Kache go boom.

JD: —let me know. [realises what Chase said; giggles] Yes.

KAYA: Okay, so yeah, JD, give me a perform—give us a Performance.

JD: Sixteen.

KAYA: Can all three of you give me an Insight check? We'll see who understands!

CHÉ: Who understands Kache the best...

HANS: I rolled a six.

JD: And... And I—

CHASE: Nine.

CHÉ: Thirteen.

ZYN: This one will let you know if this one *ever* wishes to imbibe a beverage...in public.

KAYA: [softly laughs at the running bit] I think Titoh like, you've most like—you got the idea, you get the gist of it.

CHÉ: I'll *wink*.

[CHÉ & KAYA & CHASE laughing]

CHÉ: I got you. Surreptitious finger guns.

KAYA: Okay. And the batarian manhandles Gratchen up the stairs [GRATCH struggling noises] to Aria, the Pirate Queen of Omega.

JD: I'm going to go to a place by the bar where I can see what's going on up there, and keep an eye on them.

KAYA: Okay.

JD: And I am going to order another flight—and I've taken the credits off already—of ryncol—of highly flammable ryncol [KAYA wheezes] and nurse one of them—

KAYA: [overlapping] Okay.

JD: —in preparation, just in case.

CHÉ: I like where this is going.

KAYA: Okay.

HANS: I still have my beverage, by the way.

KAYA: That's true. That's true. Uh, okay... Alright! So you three have—you've been—well, Gratchen has been *shoved* up the stairs to see Aria, and you guys have followed along I assume. She is in her standard laid back pose with their arms out on the couch—I do not have room to do that in this booth—and her legs crossed in front of her, the epitome of 'do not give a fuck'. And she looks you, Gratchen, up and down and she says,

ARIA: Was very *bold* of you to come back, now wasn't it. I can appreciate... a *bold* move when I see one. But there's a difference between *bold* and *suicidal*. [sizing him up] Which side are you on?

GRATCH: This is Gratchen's first time here! Gratchen don't know what you're talking about.

ARIA: [not even slightly convinced] Don't bullshit me.

GRATCH: Okay, fine. *Your stupid volus had it coming!*

ZYN: This one is confused. Gratchen is clearly a different vorcha than her cousin... Gratch. Observe the glorious golden [purple?] locks and the beautiful dress. Gratch would never wear such finery. Gratch is too unsophisticated for that.

CHASE: Gratch'll twirl.

ZYN: Gratchen is also much stronger than Gratch.

GRATCH: [berserker button] That's—*No!* Gratch is *strongest*. *GRATCH IS STRONGEST!*

CHASE: Just completely breaks character at this point.

JD: [dramatically] No! [laughs]

TITOH: [whispers with great annoyance] Gratch! Shut up!

HANS: [whispers] Shaddap!

KAYA: Aria watches all of this without so much as an eyebrow twitch.

CHÉ: I will like step in and be like:

TITOH: [clears throat] I'm sorry, Aria. It is—as you say, it's Gratch, but he wanted to come to make amends. And this was... *his way* of showing you that he's changed and become a better person, and just...wants to make it up to you. What do you say?

GRATCH: [sincerely] Gratch is pretty on the outside *and* the inside.

KAYA: [laughing] When the DM stops *giggling*... [still laughing] Um... Aria thinks this over. And then turns back to Gratch and says,

ARIA: Is this true?

CHÉ: I'm gonna, like nudge Gratch and, like,

TITOH: [whispers] *Say it's true!*

GRATCH: [pause, then slowly as if he's either fighting to get the words out or picking them *very carefully*] ...Yes. Gratch is...very...sorry...for killing Aria's favorite volus [rapidly speeding up] that's stupid and doesn't know who's strongest.

TITOH: [overlapping] *Shhh!*

KAYA: [wheezes] Um...roll me a Charm check with advantage.

CHASE: Alright... Well, that's an eight...and that's *another* eight. Welp.

KAYA: [laughs in disbelief] She con—she considers.

ARIA: [ah well, what can you do] Well, you know... you can always get another volus. It's not that hard. But I don't really think you've made it up to me. I can see that you're trying to, ah...make amends? Although I must say, if you think it'll convince me to let you off the hook by *becoming a better person*? You have *vastly* misunderstood what makes the Queen of Omega tick, so... think about *that* the next time you, ah, slip into solipsism, hm?

Now, you. My...dear...*sweet*...vorcha.

KAYA: You can tell that the words are *very* foreign in her mouth, and she's definitely not using them in a particularly...*complementary* way.

ARIA: If you really want to make it up to me and earn back the right to set foot on my asteroid, then you're gonna have to do something for me.

GRATCH: You want Gratchen to dance?

[JD, CHE, and HANS chortle]

[ARIA low chuckle]

CHASE: Gratchen starts looking for a pole...

ARIA: That is condition one—because I could do with a laugh—but no, I have a better idea. You see...something is killing people on my asteroid, and I don't like it. Because, you see, I don't—I don't really care if people *die*. People die every day. As long as it's not me... But I don't like not *knowing* what's happening on my asteroid. So: you and your little friends are going to go to the Barrows, and you are going to find out what is turning my people into...how shall we say...husks?

[dramatic pause]

ARIA: I understand that there's a doctor set up in Gozu District who's put out a bounty for any intact bodies. So there are some credits in it...if you care. You won't be getting any from me. You'll just be getting the opportunity to not have your head blown off the next time I catch you setting foot in Afterlife—you and all your little friends. I figure that's a fair trade. What do you say?

ZYN: [oblivious] This one does not have a head.

[TITOH clears her throat]

KAYA: She snorts and says,

ARIA: Ah, but hanar do pop so satisfactorily when you shoot them.

GRATCH: [curious] Do they?

ARIA: *Oh, yes.*

ZYN: This one has never experienced such a thing.

GRATCH: Um... Aria is *most generous overlord*.

ARIA: And don't you forget it.

GRATCH: Gratch...en will...will find husk doctor. [ooh, hey] Can I kill husk doctor?

ARIA: [amused] No, I actually like him.

GRATCH: [disappointed] Oh.

TITOH: If I may clarify—so there's a hu—a doctor that's turning corpses into husks?

ARIA: Well, if he's the one doing it, then he's *very silly* to be putting a bounty on bringing back bodies. No, he's trying to figure it out too.

TITOH: [oh that makes more sense] Oh, okay. I—I thought people were bringing him corpses to turn into husks. Okay. I get you.

ARIA: Alright. Is that everything?

GRATCH: Yes.

ARIA: Then get out of my sight.

GRATCH: But Gratchen owes Aria dance!

ZYN: Actually, there *is* another matter to discuss.

KAYA: Oh boy.

CHASE: Go for it.

ARIA: Yes...?

ZYN: This one wonders: have you seen Kasumi Goto, and if so, do you know her present whereabouts? She has stolen a most valuable artifact from The Most Serene Dawning of the Mind's... This one cannot even remember it. The museum in which this one works.

KAYA: [amused] You *sure* you didn't drink that ryncol?

JD: The Most Serene Blossom of the Mind's Dawning.

HANS: Yeah, that's the place!

[CHASE chuckles]

KAYA: [muttering] The Enkrundled Blob of Sacramento...

JD: [cackles]

KAYA: Aria cocks her head.

ARIA: If Kasumi Goto is here then I would *sure* like to know about it, but I'm afraid I can't help you.

ZYN: [unfazed] Very well. Thank you for your time.

TITOH: Hello—question, if I may, Aria, simply because our mission may coincide with your mission that you've given to us—

JD: [awed by the audacity of this bitch] *Wow.*

TITOH: —this will, this will help you too. Have you heard of any strange and unusual ancient artifacts showing up here in Omega? It might be the thing, potentially, that is killing all of these devices and/or turning them into husks.

KAYA: Roll me another Charm roll.

CHÉ: [stressed] Oh, God. Charming socks off today...

JD: No pressure.

CHÉ: Okay, that is a fifteen.

HANS: At least one of us has social skills.

[EVERYONE general amusement]

KAYA: Aria takes a couple seconds to consider your question and says,

ARIA: Counter your question with a question. I haven't *seen* any artifacts, although I know that they move through here...but a Cerberus cruiser came in this morning, and I don't like them. And they were being even cagier than usual about what they were carrying, so... Do I know if they've got what you're after? Couldn't tell you. But if you want to, ah, *wreck their day*, I wouldn't complain.

TITOH: Thank you for the tip, Aria.

CHÉ: She gives her kind of like a, "we're peers now" look.

[CHASE and CHÉ laugh]

KAYA: Aria's eyebrow just *raises*... [JD cackles] and she's like, no smile, no expression, just: [entirely unimpressed] "Really?"

JD: Love that Titoh's, like, rubbing elbows with the bigwigs. [dissolves into laughter]

CHÉ: [you know it!] Yeah.

KAYA: She just sort of motions with one hand on the back of the couch, just a little flick, like, *get out of here*.

TITOH: [urgent whisper] Let's get out of here.

CHÉ: And I yank Gratch away before he says anything that ruins all of my hard work.

KAYA: As you guys are leaving, Aria calls back,

ARIA: See you here later for your dance, Gratchen!

CHASE: I did roll a twenty on my Performance check— or, well, a dirty twenty.

CHÉ: Oh my gosh.

KAYA: *Hell* yeah.

CHASE: For dancing on the...

KAYA: Well, if you want to use that there, you—you have—there's a—there's a free pole on the way down.

GRATCH: Let's get it over with!

CHÉ: Is it like a fireman's pole you could slide down from the top all the—

KAYA: Yeah. Yeah, it's like, it's the—

CHÉ: —way down to the bottom, yeah.

KAYA: Yeah. Yeah.

CHASE: So Gratchen, in beautiful dress and streaming makeup, is gonna hop on the pole... A little, you know, little stiff at first, starts to...

GRATCH: *Alright. Do this, and I... dance my hips and I swing around and—and—Gratch can... upside down!*

[KAYA wheezes in amused disbelief]

CHASE: And then—*natural twenty on Dex[terity] check!*

KAYA: *Yeah!*

HANS: Omnitools can record video, right?

[CHASE laughing in the background]

JD: Woooo!

KAYA: Oh absolutely.

HANS: I'm recording this for...posterity.

KAYA: Good.

CHÉ: For the museum you'll be making about this one day.

KAYA: To update Carver and Bean obviously.

HANS: [oh definitely] Of course, yes.

[JD cackles]

VI: You have been listening to *I Should Roll: Ride of the Valkyrie*, Episode Four: *Dancing with the Asteroids*. Featuring the voices of Hans Cummings as Zynamondan, Ché Grové as Titoh Raas, Chase Hutchison as Gratch. JD Kelly as Kache, and Kaya Renwick as everyone and everything else.

Music and sound effects are used under Creative Commons and royalty-free licences. For the extended credits, please see the show notes, and for more information please visit ishouldroll.com.

Find us everywhere on social media at I Should Roll, and don't forget to leave us a review.

I Should Roll is an Intergalactic Improv Initiative production. This fan podcast is a transformative work and is not affiliated with Electronic Arts or BioWare.

Thank you for listening. Have a pleasant day.